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The Advantages of Public Education.

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S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D A T

C H R I S T - C H U R C H,
N E W G A T E - S T R E E T,

On WEDNESDAY, *November 17, 1784,*

Being the Day of the ACCESSION of

QUEEN ELIZABETH to the THRONE;

Before the Right Worshipful the

G O V E R N O R S

O F

C H R I S T ' S - H O S P I T A L.

BY THE REV. T H O M A S L L O Y D, M.A.

Curate of the Parish of AYLESBURY, BUCKS.

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L O N D O N:

Printed by C H A R L E S R I V I N G T O N,
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M D C C L V X X I V.

To the Right Worshipful
ROBERT ALSO P, Esq;
P R E S I D E N T,
The Worshipful
THOMAS BURFOOT, Esq;
T R E A S U R E R,
And the other
G O V E R N O R S
O F
C H R I S T's - H O S P I T A L :

GENTLEMEN,

I M P R E S S E D with sentiments of
gratitude and acknowledgement for the
many signal advantages of a liberal edu-
cation, which I have received under your
immediate Patronage at Christ's-Hospital,
I humbly beg leave to present to you the
following

following Discourse, which has been distinguished by your kind and unmerited approbation, and is published at your request.

GENTLEMEN,

with the greatest respect,

your most obliged, and

most obedient Servant,

Thomas Lloyd.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 14, 15.

But continue thou in the things, which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them ; and that from a Child thou hast known the holy Scriptures.

HOW plausibly soever the prejudice of education, and the power of example have been urged in order to deprecate the influence of religion ; yet, that both instruction and authority, under proper regulations, have their real use in forming the first outlines of virtue and religion, in guarding the tender and defenceless passages of life from the impressions of vice and folly, and conducting the unstable

B soul,

soul, till it comes to a perfect man, “ unto
“ the measure of the stature of the fulness
“ of Christ,” is what general knowledge
has asserted, and is a truth confirmed by
general experience. St. Paul’s exhortation
to Timothy in the words before us has clearly
established this doctrine. He speaks to
him of learning and instruction previous to
his profession of christianity ; he proposes to
him the pattern of his Instructor, as what
he ought always to have in view : he re-
minds him of his application to the study of
the holy Scriptures even from his infancy ;
and upon these particulars he forms his ad-
monition to him to continue stedfast in a
profession founded on these principles ; “ but
“ continue thou in the things which thou
“ hast learned,” &c.

I shall take occasion from the words of
the Apostle to propose these three things to
your

your consideration, first, The advantages of education in general; secondly, the usefulness of public education; and thirdly, the necessity of a learned education for those in particular, who are to be employed in the work of the ministry.

As to the first of these, we read in scripture that “ man is born like a wild ass’s “ colt.” We come into the world the most helpless of all creatures, and are indebted to the kind assistance of others for all our attainments: we are born indeed with natural faculties capable of great and noble improvements; but these faculties without culture would lie dormant and useless: we bring into the world little more than a capacity of being taught.

Various indeed are mens capacities, different are the improvements they make when

when instructed ; but without instruction very few, if any, would make a great progress in knowledge : ignorance and error would overspread the world, “ darkness would cover the earth, and gross darkness the people.” For this reason education has been often compared to the polishing of precious stones ; they all lie alike undistinguished in the native rock, but when embellished by the hand of the artist, they shine forth with a variety of lustres. The great difference observable among mankind seems not to be so much owing to the difference of their natural parts, as to the different manner of their education. Though one man may very much excel another in the gifts of nature, yet the difference between one nation and another, the improvements of one age above another, must be wholly owing to education. There are doubtless

doubtless men born with as good natural understandings in times of the grossest ignorance, as in the most enlightened ages, amongst the most barbarous and savage nations, as amongst the most polite and civilized. When therefore we survey the deplorable ignorance of dark ages ; when with wonder we consider the amazing stupidity and brutal savageness of some of our species, and with pleasure reflect on our own superior improvements, then let us gratefully acknowledge the advantages of learning, and with humble thankfulness give glory to God for the inestimable blessing of a liberal education ; let us congratulate ourselves on being born in a civilized country, and in an age, in which learning, arts, and sciences, are brought almost to perfection.

Deriving such benefits from education we must needs acknowledge it to be as useful

and as necessary, as a guide to the wanderer, or a light to the benighted traveller : for by its salutary influence not only our understanding, but our will, and all our faculties, are rectified and improved. Morality is an art, and a very difficult one. We are born with a great variety of appetites and passions ; these without early care and culture are apt to engross the whole man, to enslave our reason, and betray us into numberless follies and vices. Our passions therefore must be restrained, before they are grown too headstrong, and the seeds of vice plucked up, before they have taken too deep root in our hearts ; we must in our tender years be formed to the practice of virtue, and seasoned betimes with a sense of duty, and love of religion.

The education of youth is a task, that will try the skill of the most prudent, and employ

employ the care and application of the most vigilant, *precept must be given upon precept, and line upon line.* Frequent instructions and repeated admonitions will be found necessary to keep them steady in the pursuit of virtue and happiness, to fortify them against the temptations that every where surround them, and preserve them from the spreading infection of vice and irreligion: to guard the avenues of the heart the head should be carefully fortified; and the innocence of the dove is to be established by the wisdom of the serpent. To this end great care and assiduity must be exerted and observed in the culture of the minds of youth: early principles of virtue and religion must be strongly inculcated and instilled into them; authority must be joined to care and instruction; our duty must be enforced, as well as taught, and discipline must perfect instruction. The necessity of education is

never

never more plainly seen, than in the behaviour of those who unhappily want it: in short, it is that which polishes our rude, unformed nature, smooths our rugged dispositions, and makes our crooked tempers strait, checks the wild eruptions of youth, weans us from our natural impetuosity, and, as it were, new casts us in a gentler and softer mould, corrects our petulant humours, stifles the tumults and disorders of the brute within us, and disciplines us into humanity.

I proceed, secondly, to shew how these advantages may most effectually be obtained, by considering the usefulness of public education. If we look into history, we shall find that all civilized nations have made public provision, and established public seminaries for the education of such as were to be employed in offices civil, or sacred. The Jews, though they enjoyed the advantage

tage of immediate inspiration, yet had their schools of the Prophets, where the youth were instructed in the principles of religion, and by a virtuous and liberal education both qualified to discharge the ordinary functions of the ministry, and also better disposed to receive the extraordinary gifts of prophecy and miracles. From the short and scattered accounts we have of these Schools, or Colleges, of Prophets, thus much may be collected, that they were places of public education; that the most eminent of the Prophets presided over them, and instructed the youth there, who were called the Sons, or Disciples, of the Prophets; that they were educated in the study of true religion, and useful learning, and employed in religious exercises; that they lived together in societies subject to authority and stated rules of government. Several wise states amongst the Heathens too thought it not proper to

entrust a matter of such public concernment, as the education of youth, to the care of ill-judging and over-indulgent Parents ; as the negligence of the father, added to the fondness of the mother, would tend rather to render them untractable and disobedient, than pliable to discipline and order, their partiality would palliate their failings and vices, and exaggerate their merit and virtues. To prevent such evils, the government judged it proper to commit their education to public masters, men of abilities and integrity, not blinded by fondness to neglect, or partiality to indulge ; men, who would carefully superintend their education, and have a watchful eye over their morals ; under whom they might receive early impressions of virtue, and become qualified for their respective destinations by being initiated betimes in useful learning, and valuable arts. And thus the youth were, by the care and prudence

prudence of the government, qualified to fill the most important offices in civil life. In short, there never was any civilized nation, whose rulers have not by their munificence founded, and by their authority supported and encouraged seminaries of public education. In these later ages none have more eminently distinguished themselves by their attention to such useful establishments, than the Protestant Princes of the house of TUDOR, particularly the illustrious Queen Elizabeth, the day of whose auspicious accession to the throne of England we are now, by the will of a pious Benefactor, assembled here to commemorate: and no doubt, impressed with a just sense of the many invaluable blessings, both civil and religious, derived to us from her excellent administration, he was willing, on this stated day, to call them forth to our remembrance, and fix them in our hearts by an anniversary solemnity.

nity. “ This is the day which the Lord
“ hath made, we will rejoice and be glad
“ in it ; ” a day auspicious to this favoured
Isle ; as then this country felt the full com-
pletion of the grand work so happily begun by
her royal and pious Brother. Then our Fore-
fathers gloriously delivered themselves from
the iron shackles of ignorance, superstition,
and error, under which this land had groan-
ed for so many ages, and emerged at once
into light, wisdom, and truth ; and we
their sons still feel the beneficial influence
of that deliverance from captivity, in the
full enjoyment of the pure word of the
Gospel ; which, if we make it the rule of
our actions, will be “ a light to our feet,
“ and a lantern to our paths,” and will
certainly lead us all to the land of everlast-
ing life, and to the mansions of eternal bliss
and glory. Highly does it become us, and all
Britons, to commemorate the day, on which,

by

by the divine Providence, Elizabeth mounted the throne of this kingdom ; a Princess, whose great talents were uniformly and invariably directed to the welfare of her people ; who had no views, but to promote their interest ; no glory, but in their prosperity. 'Tis to her chiefly (as the instrument of Heaven) that we are indebted for the inestimable blessing of religious liberty, which we now enjoy ; under her wise administration (pardon the repetition) the rage of bigotry and superstition was restrained, and true religion (which had long, alas ! too long, been obscured and disfigured by the vilest superstition) restored to its primitive and original lustre and beauty ; polite literature revived, and was promoted by her example, and rewarded by her munificence. Intimately acquainted with the value of learning, virtue, and religion, she was most bountiful in erecting, and most zealous in

E bebefriending,

befriending, seminaries sacred to these uses, whose good effects were diffused far and wide, and extend themselves not only to the present age, but will have a beneficial influence on succeeding generations.

Excellent as the establishment of public places of education is, yet there are not wanting men, who from a fondness for innovation, and an aversion to the established usages, take pleasure in decrying the common methods of instruction, and represent Schools and Universities as abounding with innumerable defects. Defects, 'tis true, they have, and like all other human establishments, they are attended with inconveniences ; but this does not disprove their general utility. But the subject is too diffuse for a discourse of this nature ; I therefore only observe, that the advocates for private education seem wholly to forget, or wilfully

to

to omit mentioning, the inconveniencies attending private tuition ; they seem to think, that Parents and private Tutors are capable neither of folly, nor vice. Thus, by omitting to enumerate the evils on their own side of the question, and aggravating the inconveniencies on the other, they deceive the unwary, who are fond of novelty, and can more easily see such imperfections as experience has discovered, than they can foresee the evils, with which a new scheme will be attended.

Let us not therefore amuse ourselves with imaginary ideas of perfection not to be attained, but let us consider things as they are in fact ; and the advantage will be found altogether on the side of public education. There is wanting in the private scheme that great spur to industry, emulation ; a strong passion at all times, but more especially in our

tender

tender years. To see diligence encouraged in others, examples of ingenuity, and industry before us, our equals contending, and our inferiors pushing forward towards us ; this by stimulating our pride (if we have a spark of generous ambition in our breasts) rouzes our invention, and quickens our application, and makes us out-do ourselves, whilst we strive to excel others. Thus industry is necessary to preserve us from sinking in our rank ; and the mind of youth is endued with such sensibility, that degradation visibly and deeply affects the heart ; and what a mind could sustain in private, it cannot support in public, in the eye of associates. There is farther advantage attending a public education ; by conversing with companions in the same line of study we help and improve one another, we enjoy the benefit of others labor, as well as our own ; and, more than this, we read human nature

nature free and undisguised in youth ; we are trained to love virtue betimes and to detest vice, to guard against the one, and cultivate the other ; and are fitted for manly society on the larger theatre of the world.

In my discourse I have mentioned only such advantages, as public places of education must necessarily have above all private methods of instruction ; the same improvements cannot be expected in a private plan, where it is impossible to have either the same means, or the same motives to proficiency. Here I drop the argument ; and proceed, thirdly, to prove the necessity of a learned education, for those in particular, who are to be employed in the work of the ministry, in preaching the Gospel of Christ.

We have already explained the sentiments of the great Apostle on this point : instruc-

F tion,

tion, example, and early knowledge of the Scriptures are urged by him to Timothy, as valuable advantages, and powerful inducements to perseverance; he approves their influence, and upon this footing establishes the conduct of his Disciple. The Apostle himself has acquainted us, that he was educated at Jerusalem, the Athens of the Jews, in one of the most celebrated Schools, under one of the most eminent Doctors of the law, and fully instructed in the knowledge of the Jewish religion, in the customs and traditions of the Fathers, and in the most perfect manner of interpreting the law. If religion then might receive assistance from learning, even in those ages when inspiration prevailed, there must be in the present times much greater occasion for this assistance, when the miraculous power is gone from us, and difficulties in religious matters are increased. The knowledge of divine truths,

truths, as well as others, is now to be learned by instruction, and attained by industry. The Apostles and first ministers of the Gospel had no need to study or premeditate, but they spake as the spirit gave them utterance ; but now that that gift is withdrawn from men, the present ministers of the new Testament must study with attention, must “ search the Scriptures ; ” must seek out knowledge with pains, that they may impart it with profit to the hearers. It will appear indeed, from a survey of the pastoral office, and the several branches of duty it comprehends, that it must be no slight preparation, which will qualify men for, nor a small degree of assiduity, that will enable them to go through, a proper and effectual discharge of it ; so as they may give an account of the “ faith that is in “ them,” so as they may be able to instruct the ignorant, confirm the doubtful, correct

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the erroneous, reclaim the vicious, convince the gainsayers, and establish the orthodox believer.

To promote these desirable ends, it will be necessary in these days of error and infidelity to have frequent recourse to, and a due acquaintance with, those sacred writings, which are the gracious Charter of all our Christian privileges. To understand the duties, doctrines, promises, and motives which they contain, to inculcate and recommend them with advantage to the hearer, will be wanted the subsidiary helps of human learning; some knowledge of sacred and profane antiquity; of the original languages, in which those books are written; some insight into the tempers and passions of men, into the usage and customs of past ages, as well as of the prevailing habits of the age in which we live; some skill in the arts

arts of reasoning and composition, of eloquence and persuasion. These, and more than these, requisites will be occasionally proper to be made use of, and must therefore in some measure be attained, before a man can become an able minister of the new testament. Such are the fruits and effects of a virtuous and liberal education; such the influence it has upon every part of social and civil life; such its tendency to render us good men, good subjects, and useful members of the commonwealth.

I shall avail myself of the present opportunity of making just and grateful mention of the place of my education, and of many others, who have been fed with the pleasant milk of learning and knowledge within the bosom of the neighbouring venerable walls. It gives me pleasure to deliver my heart from the burthen of gratitude under which

it labours. Enjoying the exquisite sensations in my own breast, I am solicitous to excite them in the bosoms of all those who are now present, and nurtured and educated by this most excellent foundation; that inspired with the same sentiments, and feeling the same sensations, they may be animated with me to pay the same homage of praise and thanks, which is indispensably due from us, in the first place, to Almighty God, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh down, and who inspires the hearts of men with the generous sentiments of charity and beneficence: next, let us pay our tribute of gratitude and acknowledgement to the memory of our Founders and Benefactors, for erecting and endowing this our School: to our masters, for their unwearyed pains and diligence in forming the manners, polishing the nature, and cultivating the minds of those committed to their

their charge: and lastly, to those great Supporters and Encouragers of our School, the honourable body of Governors, whom not to mention in this place with all due regard and respect would be to incur the censure of ingratitude. With so much honor to themselves, and benefit to the foundation, have they discharged the trust reposed in them, and so fully have they answered the expectation conceived of them, that, next under God, to them we owe the continuance of the flourishing state and condition of the School. May the Almighty still protect the work of their hands, and give success to their unwearied exertions; may all those, whose hearts are so generously inclined, meet (as surely they must) with the applause of all worthy men here, and with that exceeding great reward, which God (who is not unrighteous to forget their labor of love) will bestow upon the compassionate and good;

good ; and finally, let all the people lift up their voice with one accord, and say, " the " Lord prosper you, we wish you good luck " in the name of the Lord." Amen.

T H E E N D.